

WELSBACH & GENERAL GAS MANTLE CONTAMINATION NEW JERSEY

EPA ID# NJD986620995



EPA REGION 2
CONGRESSIONAL DIST. 1
Camden County
City of Camden
Gloucester City

Other Names:
Camden County Radiation

Site Description

The Welsbach and General Gas Mantle Contamination site is comprised of two former incandescent gas mantle manufacturing sites and numerous residential properties in the cities of Camden and Gloucester City, New Jersey. The Welsbach Company and the General Gas Mantle Company were involved in the production of gas mantles from the late 1890s to 1941. The companies utilized thorium, a radionuclide that emits gamma radiation during radioactive decay, as a constituent in their manufacturing process. In addition, four nearby residential areas exhibit elevated levels of gamma radiation.

Site Responsibility: The site is being addressed through Federal and state actions.

NPL LISTING HISTORY

Proposed Date: 10/02/95

Final Date: 6/17/96

Threats and Contaminants



Soil contains thorium and other radioactive materials. As a result of the radioactive decay of these materials, elevated levels of gamma radiation are present. Residents who are directly exposed to radiation, or inadvertently ingest radioactive particles from the site may suffer adverse health effects.

Cleanup Approach

The site is being addressed in two stages: immediate actions and a long-term remedial phase focusing on the entire site.

Response Action Status



Immediate Actions: In the early 1990s, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) investigated over 1100 properties in Camden and Gloucester City, New Jersey, for radiological contamination. As a protective measure, NJDEP installed gamma radiation shielding on about 30 properties and radon/thoron ventilation systems on three properties. NJDEP also purchased one contaminated residential property and relocated one commercial business. In December 1998, EPA excavated approximately 200 cubic yards of radiologically contaminated soil from a public park area in Gloucester City and replaced it with clean fill. In September 2001, EPA performed another removal action in Gloucester City. EPA removed approximately 160 cubic yards of radiologically contaminated soils from three residential properties and installed a radon mitigation system on another property.



Entire Site: In August 1996, EPA initiated a remedial investigation and feasibility study (RI/FS) to determine the nature and extent of contamination throughout the site, and the risks posed by the site. In September 1997, EPA started field investigations at a number of residential and industrial properties. EPA completed the field investigations in August 1998, and finalized the RI/FS in January 1999. In February 1999, EPA released for public comment its proposed plan for cleaning up the radiologically contaminated properties. EPA held public meetings in Camden and Gloucester City in February 1999 to discuss the results of the RI/FS, and its proposed remedy. In July 1999, EPA signed the Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD estimated that about 60 properties in Camden and Gloucester have radiation levels above the cleanup standards. The selected remedy includes excavation and off-site disposal of 43,000 cubic yards of radiologically-contaminated soil and waste materials on both residential and industrial properties in Camden and Gloucester City and demolition and off-site disposal of the General Gas Mantle Building in Camden. The ROD also called for EPA to investigate over 600 properties in Camden and Gloucester City to confirm NJDEP's data and to make sure no contamination is overlooked.

In August 1999, EPA initiated the remedial design activities for the selected remedy. EPA completed the design of the demolition of the General Gas Mantle Building in June 2000. Demolition of the building began in December 2000 and was completed in February 2001. In May 2000, EPA started the design field investigations of the residential properties. The first phase of the design was completed in September 2001. In Fall 2001, EPA selected Conti Environmental Inc. as its contractor to perform the first phase of the residential property cleanup. In April 2002, EPA plans to start this cleanup.

Enforcement Progress

In September 1997, EPA entered into an Administrative Order on Consent (AOC) with Holt Hauling and Warehousing, Inc. (Holt). Under the terms of the AOC, Holt agreed to perform an RI/FS on a radiologically contaminated building (the Armstrong Building) on its property. Holt is the current owner of the property formerly owned and operated by the Welsbach Company, and the Armstrong Building is the last building remaining from Welsbach's operations. In January 2000, Holt completed the RI/FS. EPA anticipates that it will select a cleanup remedy for the Armstrong Building in the Fall of 2002.

Environmental Progress



By installing shielding at the site, removing the surface contamination in the public park and residential properties, and the demolition of the General Gas Mantle Building, EPA and the State have reduced the short-term risks associated with exposure to excessive levels of gamma radiation.

Site Repository



City of Camden Main Library
418 Federal Street
Camden, New Jersey 08103
(609)757-7650

Gloucester City Public Library
Monmouth and Hudson Streets
Gloucester City, New Jersey 08030
(609) 456-4181